

Dave Ramsey Fired Employee for Taking Covid Precautions, Suit Says

In his complaint, a former employee says the Tennessee radio broadcaster, an evangelical Christian who has built a personal finance empire, violated his religious rights.

By Maria Cramer

Dec. 14, 2021

The radio broadcaster and anti-debt crusader Dave Ramsey has been accused of firing an employee for wearing masks at the office and for wanting to work from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a federal lawsuit filed this week.

The lawsuit said that Mr. Ramsey, an evangelical Christian and the owner of Ramsey Solutions, a personal finance advice empire that he started in 1992, ran a “cultlike” environment where employees who worried about the pandemic were accused of “weakness of spirit” and told to pray if they wanted to ward off the virus.

The complaint was filed in U.S. District Court in Tennessee on Monday by Brad Amos, a former employee at the company, which is based near Nashville. A lawyer for Mr. Ramsey said the case was without merit and that the company

has followed guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Amos, 45, said he was hired in 2019 as a senior video editor making \$90,000 a year, then was fired in July 2020, after repeatedly telling his supervisors that he wanted to work from home to protect the health of his wife and son, in accordance with his own Christian beliefs.

Mr. Ramsey's company "terminated Plaintiff for taking scientifically prescribed precautions, as required by his sincerely held religious beliefs, in the Covid pandemic rather than relying on prayer alone to protect himself," the lawsuit stated.

"Employees who wore masks to meetings were mocked and derided," according to the lawsuit.

Daniel Cortez, general counsel for Ramsey Solutions, described Mr. Amos's claims as "outlandish" and said they had "absolutely no merit."

"The company has never looked down upon individuals who chose to either wear masks or become vaccinated," Mr. Cortez said on Tuesday. He said he himself is vaccinated and regularly wears masks to the office. "It's very unfortunate that Mr. Amos has filed this lawsuit in federal court, but we are very confident that we will prevail."

He said that Mr. Amos was fired after he insulted a supervisor who had called a meeting with him to discuss his work, which had begun to suffer. Mr. Cortez said that Mr. Amos had told the supervisor that he was "arrogant and not humble."

"That is a complete and utter lie," said Mr. Amos's lawyer, Jonathan Street. "It's an excuse they're using because he wouldn't kiss Dave Ramsey's feet."

Mr. Ramsey, who preaches that people can become millionaires by living simply and spending thriftily, has a weekly audience of about 23 million people through his podcasts and radio and online presence, according to Ramsey Solutions.

His advice, which he also describes in his best-selling books and in a nine-week course called Financial Peace University, is steeped in an ethos that paying off debt and saving money is both common sense and ordained by God.

But more recently he has become known as a critic of restrictions intended to slow the spread of the coronavirus, which has killed nearly 800,000 Americans since early 2020.

Early in the pandemic, Mr. Ramsey, whose company employs more than 1,000 people, decried the shutdown and said “lives were being harmed more” by such restrictions “than by the actual virus.”

In December 2020, his company threw a large, indoor Christmas party where employees were not required to wear masks, according to Religion News Service, which also reported the filing of Mr. Amos’s lawsuit.

On his show, Mr. Ramsey has advised people who did not wish to get vaccinated and were now facing termination to quit their jobs and said that “only the big companies that are optics concerned” were enacting “stupid” policies.

According to his lawyer, Mr. Amos moved his family from California to Tennessee to work for Ramsey Solutions. He liked the philosophy Mr. Ramsey espoused and wanted to live in Williamson County, which has a large conservative and Christian presence, Mr. Street said.

After the pandemic hit, Gov. Bill Lee of Tennessee issued a statement that “strongly” discouraged gatherings of 250 people or more, according to the lawsuit.

On March 15, 2020, Mr. Ramsey emailed employees to tell them there had been a confirmed case of Covid-19 in the office.

That employee worked in Mr. Amos's department, according to the lawsuit. The following day, employees were told they had to attend an "on-site" meeting, where Mr. Ramsey announced that the company would not allow people to work from home, the complaint stated.

"Specifically in this 900-person meeting," the complaint said, "Mr. Ramsey stated that fear of working in the office because of Covid demonstrated 'weakness of spirit.'"

Mr. Amos told his supervisor he was worried about putting his wife and son at risk. His son, who was then 6, has Coats disease, a rare disorder that causes an abnormal development of blood vessels in the retina, and his wife has a "predisposition for pneumonia," according to the lawsuit.

Mr. Amos's supervisor replied that he should "pray and keep moving forward," the lawsuit stated.

The company eventually allowed people to work from home, but called Mr. Amos back into the office because he was deemed "an essential employee," according to the complaint.

When Mr. Amos resisted, he said he was demoted from senior video editor to assistant video editor.

The lawsuit said that Mr. Amos was also ordered to attend meetings "designed to indoctrinate Plaintiff to the personal religious views of Dave Ramsey as a spiritual leader."

In July, Mr. Amos was called into another meeting with his supervisor, who criticized him for standing apart from other employees at the office.

He was told that he “was not a good fit” and was perceived to have a “lack of humility,” the lawsuit stated.

After he was fired, Mr. Amos moved back to California, Mr. Street said. He found another job in the video editing industry, Mr. Street said.

A trailer that Mr. Street said Mr. Amos edited for “Borrowed Future,” a documentary about student debt produced by Ramsey Solutions, was still on the company’s website on Tuesday.

A correction was made on Dec. 14, 2021: An earlier version of this article misstated the name of a news organization that reported on the lawsuit brought against Dave Ramsey by a former employee. It is Religion News Service, not the Religious News Service.

When we learn of a mistake, we acknowledge it with a correction. If you spot an error, please let us know at nytnews@nytimes.com. [Learn more](#)

Maria Cramer is a breaking news reporter on the Express Desk.